

Junayd

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PROFESSOR LOUIS MASSIGNON, the value of whose contributions to the study of Sufism cannot be over-estimated, gives a short but penetrating account of the doctrines of Junayd in his *Essai sur les Origines du Lexique Technique de la Mystique Musulmane*.¹ This account is preceded by an analysis of the contents of the manuscript of Junayd's *opuscula* which is preserved at Istanbul.² In his *Recueil de Textes Inédits* ³ Massignon gives extracts of this manuscript. It has recently been my good fortune, through the generosity of the Egyptian University, to obtain a photograph of this manuscript—and I must not omit to acknowledge the kindly services of Dr. Ritter in this connection—as a preliminary to the fulfilment of what has been for some time my immediate intention, namely, to write a monograph on the life and doctrines of Junayd, and to edit all his surviving *reliquiae*.

This is not the place to enter into a detailed criticism of this work. In introducing my translation of the first of the short treatises contained in the Istanbul MS., I have to record that Massignon's account of its contents is in some particulars somewhat inaccurate. The *risálah fi 'l-sukr* and the *risálah fi'l-ifáqah*, nos. 8 and 9 of his list, are in reality the product of a later pen, as is proved by the fact that, on f. 49 *b*, there are references to Junayd himself among other Sufis.

LETTER OF ABU 'L-QÁSİM AL-JUNAYD TO YÚSUF

IBN AL-ḤUSAYN ⁴ (GOD HAVE MERCY UPON THEM).

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

May God keep thee in His keeping, wherein He keeps those among His friends who are pure, and may He stablish

¹ pp. 273-9.

² MS. *Shahíd 'Alí* 1374.

³ p. 49 f.

⁴ D. A.H. 304. For an account of his life, vid. *Qushayrî, Risálah* (Cairo, 1330), 22; *Shahrání, Al-Tabaqát al-Kubrâ* (Cairo, 1343), i, 77; Abu

us and thee ¹ upon the path ² of His good pleasure. May He make thee to enter the courts of His intimacy, and give thee pasture ³ in the gardens of His manifold blessings. May He watch over thee in all (thy) circumstances, even as He watches over the child while it is yet in the womb of its mother, ⁴ and the baby as it lies in its cradle. ⁴ May God lengthen for thee the life that is withdrawn from the subsistence of life, in the perpetuity of eternity ⁵: and may He set thee apart from that which is thine through Him, and that which is His through thee, so that there may be His Singleness ⁶ in its eternal continuance, not thou, nor thy state, ⁷ nor the knowledge of Him, and so that there may be God alone. ⁸

By my father I adjure thee, this that I say comes from the continuance of calamity and the consequence of misery, from a heart that is stirred from its foundations, and tormented with its ceaseless conflagrations, by itself within itself. For thus it is, being without perception, without speech, without feeling, without joy, without repose, without effort: not in the sense of passing away, but because it is constant in the calamity of its ceaseless torment, a torment without meaning, past indication, beyond limit, irresistible in its fierce onslaughts. ⁹ If it speaks, speech is an affliction, and if it is silent, silence is an affliction. Unto God is the complaint without complaining: and there comes no

¹ 'l-Fallāh al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, ii, 254; Al-Khaṭīb, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, xiv, 314-19. The exordium of this letter is quoted by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'* (ed. Nicholson), 242-3, where the text exhibits slight variations, as noted later.

¹ "thee and us" K.L.

² "paths" K.L., the variant "path" being given.

³ "elevate thee" K.L.

⁴⁻⁴ Omitted in K.L.

⁵ "in the continuance of the perpetuity of His eternity" K.L.

⁶ "that thou mayest be single through Him" K.L.

⁷ "nor what is thine" K.L.

⁸ Here the quotation in K.L. ends.

⁹ Lit. breaths.

answering reply, no easing. So it continues, wholly swallowed up : in loneliness hidden, yet it appears, and is hidden, and appears, and is hidden. I know not what I say, nor what he says, whose reins have fallen from him, whose straps have been severed ; who wanders in most perilous wildernesses, and thereof has no pleasure in the conditions of blessednesses, but driving sings :—

“ What way to win His pleasure,
Whose wrath no treason
So kindled past all measure,
Nor any reason ? ”

Or haply he says :—

“ No more will I resist my fate :
Though grief me slay,
Whate'er thy whim, inobdurate
I will obey.”

It was my wish, my dear friend, that I should not write to thee words of raving or evil thoughts, or the talk of one diseased in mind or soul¹ : but as I know thee, so I know that thou knowest that fate has more power over a man than his own resolve. So may God take thee into His friendship, and choose thee for Himself,² and make thee familiar with the knowledge which is hidden from His creatures, but which manifests from Him to His elect : for these He has changed from state to state, and transported through all the grades. First He raised them up, by confirming the condition of (their) actions³ : then He raised them up, through the realities of reaching unto Him. He veiled from them the eyes of the hearts : for these are not worth any definition or description, save as He appoints them in their (separate)

¹ Lit. mad and sick with pleurisy.

² As was Moses, *Qur'án*, xx, 43.

³ *Sc.* by making their acts accord with the Divine Law.

life through His Oneness, being alone Himself with them in the realities of the Unseen. What marvel then is there more marvellous than that certainty without doubt in which they dwell, and that doubt without certainty¹: and God is God alone. O my brother, may God crown thee with the crown of blessing on the bank of Resurrection: and may the Prophets glory in thee, and the wise men, and all God's servants. He is (our) aspiration and hope, and to Him doth praise belong, both first and last. May God bless Muḥammad the Prophet, and grant him peace evermore.

Thou hast written (may God cherish thee!) under the protection and preservation of God: and I petition God, that He may make in us and you a gratitude whereby we may attain increase in His bounty and favour. Thy letter has reached me (God keep and bless thee!) and he has come who was united with thee²: and I have learned how lofty are thy purposes in thy prayers. I pray that God may of His mercy answer (our) pious prayers, thine for us, and ours for thee. Thereafter I learned of the niceness of thy words in counselling, and I do not cease through thee to enjoy an increase of God's blessings, though ever despairing of being near to thee, yet in thy absence taking comfort in those that are thy friends; and to God I commend thee. In counsel excelling, in exhortation striving, with thy food satisfying, with thy blows stinging: in all thou hast followed the manners of the Prophets in gentleness of speech. Before God I pictured, as I read thy writings, Moses and Aaron (God's blessings be upon them!), when they were commanded to speak gently³: and it was a terrible thing to me, that my place should be the place of the Pharaohs, in thy striving to be kindly with me: for cajoling is only used with one who is insolent and ignorant, or with a child. But what means

¹ The "certainty without doubt" is the existence which is in God; the "doubt without certainty" is the existence in separate life.

² Sc. the messenger who brought the letter.

³ *Qur'án*, xx, 46.

have I, seeing that my station with thee is the station of one who must needs be treated with gentleness, that he may accept the truth, and of one who lags behind in seeking the (right) path ? And then I recall to myself the words of the poet :—

“ Not out of weakness we obey,
But as God destined unto us
Before time was, fate draws our way :
We follow thus.”

And also I say :—

“ Know now, my spirit, thy Creator’s might,
Who turns men’s destinies to His delight :
Though your bonds forge my heart’s captivity,
I thank you still, abroad and secretly.”

I pray that He may bless us with that whereunto He has commanded us, and that He may preserve us from that whereof He has forbidden us. I heard Aḥmad ibn Abi ’l-Hawárí¹ saying, I heard Abú Sulaymán² saying : “ The deeds of men are not such as to please Him or to anger Him : but with some people He is pleased, and employs them in the deeds of good-pleasure, and with others He is angry, and employs them in the deeds of anger.”³ He therefore that flees from that which is, is only at the beginning of (his) quests. With God is the consolation, for from Him is the affliction : may God preserve us and thee from His wrath, and bless us with His greatest good-pleasure, in well-being and safety.

Now thou knowest (may God cherish thee !) that the Prophets did indeed possess apostlehood, but that they did not possess the power of guidance. God says (Blessed and Exalted is He !), “ Deliver that which hath been sent down

¹ Acc. to *Shadharát al-Dhahab* (ii, 110), d. 246 ; acc. to *Risálah Qushay-riyyah* (17), and *Al-Ṭabaqát al-Kubrā* (i, 70), d. 230.

² Acc. to *Sh. Dh.* (ii, 13), d. 205 ; acc. to *R.Q.* (15), and *T.K.* (i, 68), d. 215.

³ Quoted by Sarráj, *Kitáb al-Luma’* 38.

to thee from thy Lord ”¹; then He said, “ Verily thou dost not guide him whom thou desirest.”² I pray God, Who gave thee speech wherewith to counsel me, and tasked thee with the task of writing³ to me, that He may not make void to me thy prayer, in such a place as this in which we do hope for His blessing, O my brother and the delight of my heart. Accepted from thee is all that thou brandishest, and indicatest to the eye. To God I pray for help in this, and that He may reward thee for us. If every hair upon my body were a tongue, yet wouldst thou be worthy of this from me. May God undertake to thank thee, and to reward thee for us as thou deservest.

I remember, my beloved, that urgent need in thee which so hastened unto me, that need concerning which thou puttest hope in me, namely, that I should avoid all intercourse save with those who are my true fellows: and I remember (may God guard thee!) speech whose purport this was. So gentle thou wast, so tender: and I ask God’s help in this, and with Him take refuge, that I may make my pleading a cover (for my sins), and fully repay right with right. Thou knowest that it is a grievous thing to set a bound to the truth: and I ask God for sincerity in acknowledging the truth.

Moreover (and God is my protection) there is a day when I imagine that I have confirmed the people of my age, both common and elect, in some small particular other than the mere expression of the tongue: I do not know whether this shall be reckoned for me or against me; and as for the path of merit in the assigning of judgment, may God protect us and thee from the vision of that.³ I am satisfied that there should rest for me, in the highest grade of the learned in the law, the burden of His Unity,⁴ and in the highest grade of

¹ *Qur’án*, v, 71.

² *Qur’án*, xxviii, 56.

³ *Sc.* because man’s merits disappear before the true judgment of God.

⁴ *Sc.* instead of the burden of my own shortcomings.

the religious, the eschewing of the greater sins. Haply with this verse I have made parable :—

O Thou Whose power hath kindled in my soul
This raging fire,
Were it Thy will, my heart should be made whole,
Its blaze expire.

It were no shame—so Thou hast dealt with me—
Of grief and fear
If I should die, a victim unto Thee :
No shame it were.¹

And haply I have made parable with this verse :—

Shall any part
Of penitence into my soul be brought,
Since that my heart
With all my wretchedness is still distraught ?

I have heard that a certain wise man wrote to another :
“ May God not cause thee to taste of the food of thy carnal soul : for if thou tastest of its food, thou wilt not find any other food.”² I therefore hope that thou mayst preserve thy limitations. I heard Dhu 'l-Nún say : “ Whoso is ignorant of his value, is stripped of his veil.”³ I ask God that He may grant sincerity in confession, and with God I take refuge against making a display of censuring the soul, or of eschewing display. And of thee I ask, that thou shouldst continue towards me in brotherhood and friendly counsel, recompensing me and favouring me and praying for me, and that thou shouldst ever have me in thy mind : for thou hast adorned me with thy writing, and wakened me with thy counsel—if haply thou shouldst find (in me) a wakeful zeal. And “ him only thou shalt warn, who followeth the monition

¹ These verses are quoted (with “ care ” for “ grief ”), *K.L.* 246.

² In *R.Q.* (22) and *Sh. Dh.* (ii, 245) these words are ascribed to Yúsuf ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Rází (the recipient of this letter) in a letter to Junayd.

³ This saying is quoted in *T.B.* (xiv, 314), as made by Dhu 'l-Nún to Yúsuf ibn al-Ḥusayn.

and feareth the God of mercy in secret ”¹ ; and God saith,
 “ to warn whoever liveth.”²

“ If in the heart there be no goad
 To prick the heart,
 It will not stir, whoe’er its load,
 Whate’er its smart.”

My friend, with thy own tongue³ I have addressed thee, and with that wherewith God hath profited me, both afore-times and in these latter days, I have answered thee. If there be (God cherish thee!) in this writing any error or confusion, or any slip of the tongue, thou art the most worthy to pardon it : and if there be in it aught that pleases thee, it is of thee and through thee. For thou art praiseworthy in all events : thou art the *shaykh* of all the pious now living, nay, thou art the lord of the wise men and the gnostics of thy time ; and God’s is the praise for this.

Now I do not complain (God cherish thee!) that certain of those who serve thee on our behalf, pious men who are inclined to satisfy themselves with little, have asked sustenance of us : for by my life, I am as it were a keeper of sustenance.⁴ If any man had shown me his goblet, I would have found for him one who should fill it, and men would have been satisfied with a satisfaction that hath no bound. By my life, if a man amends his inner life, God will amend for him his outer circumstance ; and if a man makes his peace with God, God will make peace between him and all men : and if a man labours for his portion in the world to come, God will suffice him in the affairs of this world. I pray God to amend our affairs with His mercy.

¹ *Qur’án*, xxxvi, 10.

² *Qur’án*, xxxvi, 70.

³ Presumably referring to the fact that he has quoted sayings of his correspondent, as noted above.

⁴ Spiritual sustenance, of course, which he has obtained from God and from his *shaykhs*.

Now upon thee be peace, and God's mercy and blessings, so long as this world and the world to come abide. And upon those who be with thee, who desire that which is with God (Blessed and Exalted is He !) and yearn for thy intimacy and thy friendship, God's greatest and most excellent peace. If thou seest fit (God perpetuate thy glory) to favour me with thy writing, thereby to acquaint me that thou art well and that God's protection is with thee, together with any need which may be calling, and which we can meet, thou wilt thereby rejoice me. And God bless Muḥammad the Prophet, and his people, and grant them peace evermore.

CAIRO, 1934.